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Written Testimony before the Human Services Committee

Elizabeth B. Ritter on behalf of the State Department on Aging

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Good morning Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, Senator Markley, Representative Wood, and members of the Committee on Human Services. I am Elizabeth Ritter, Acting Commissioner of the State Department on Aging. I am here to testify in favor of HB 6846: AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAMS.

Section one of this bill modifies the statute concerning a pilot program overseen by the State Long Term Care Ombudsman, which was created under PA 13-234 and is intended to serve home and community-based care recipients in Hartford County. The bill adds the provision that the program be conducted within available appropriations.

Until the enactment of PA 13-234, the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman's responsibilities were confined to the residents of long-term care facilities. The Act expanded the Ombudsman's responsibilities to include the pilot program, and a small amount of additional funding was included in the FY 2015 budget for the purposes of implementing the new program.

Work started on the pilot program on July 1, 2014, when the Ombudsman Program began interfacing with home care agencies and social services organizations to better understand the types of cases to expect and how the current system endeavors to resolve consumer complaints. Advertising this new aspect of the Program to consumers was done through media, but primarily by providing presentations to senior centers and to municipal social services agencies. To date, the Program has resolved some specific consumer issues, such as gaining authorization of transportation to a day program. Also, the Program has engaged in broader advocacy services, such as providing consumers with information about oversight agencies and assisting them with filing complaints.

In light of the state's fiscal situation and in accordance with Secretary Barnes' November 2014 guidance to agencies to curtail hiring, the Program has been unable to expand its personnel resources. The Governor's proposed Biennial Budget for FY 2016 and FY 2017 preserves funding to support the core mission of the State Long Term



Care Ombudsman. However, ongoing funding for the pilot program (approximately \$28,000) is removed and, at this time, it is not anticipated that the Ombudsman will be able to undertake the pilot.

HB 6846 will not negatively impact the ability of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman to serve our long-term care facility residents.

Thank you for your time and attention. I am happy to answer any questions now or at a future time.

